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MODERN LOVE

A Reprint

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

London
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AND NEW YORK
1894

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TO

ADMIRAL MAXSE

IN CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE PROMISE IN DISTURBANCE	1
MODERN LOVE	3
THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY	55
'LOVE IS WINGED FOR TWO'	86
'ASK, IS LOVE DIVINE'	88
'JOY IS FLEET'	89
THE LESSON OF GRIEF	90

THE PROMISE IN DISTURBANCE

How low when angels fall their black descent,
Our primal thunder tells: known is the pain
Of music, that nigh throning wisdom went,
And one false note cast wailful to the insane.
Now seems the language heard of Love as rain
To make a mire where fruitfulness was meant.
The golden harp gives out a jangled strain,
Too like revolt from heaven's Omnipotent.

But listen in the thought; so may there come
Conception of a newly-added chord,
Commanding space beyond where ear has home.
In labour of the trouble at its fount,
Leads Life to an intelligible Lord
The rebel discords up the sacred mount.

MODERN LOVE

I.

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes :
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed,
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between ;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

II.

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:
A languid humour stole among the hours,
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown
Before his vision, and the world forgot,
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown
The pit of infamy: and then again
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove
To ape the magnanimity of love,
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

III.

This was the woman; what now of the man?
But pass him. If he comes beneath a heel,
He shall be crushed until he cannot feel,
Or, being callous, haply till he can.
But he is nothing:—nothing? Only mark
The rich light striking out from her on him!
Ha! what a sense it is when her eyes swim
Across the man she singles, leaving dark
All else! Lord God, who mad'st the thing so fair,
See that I am drawn to her even now!
It cannot be such harm on her cool brow
To put a kiss? Yet if I meet him there!
But she is mine! Ah, no! I know too well
I claim a star whose light is overcast:
I claim a phantom-woman in the Past.
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell!

IV.

All other joy of life he strove to warm,
And magnify, and catch them to his lip:
But they had suffered shipwreck with the ship,
And gazed upon him sallow from the storm.
Or if Delusion came, 'twas but to show
The coming minute mock the one that went.
Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,
Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe:
Whom self-caged Passion, from its prison-bars,
Is always watching with a wondering hate.
Not till the fire is dying in the grate,
Look we for any kinship with the stars.
Oh, wisdom never comes when it is gold,
And the great price we pay for it full worth:
We have it only when we are half earth.
Little avails that coinage to the old!

V.

A message from her set his brain aflame.
A world of household matters filled her mind,
Wherein he saw hypocrisy designed:
She treated him as something that is tame,
And but at other provocation bites.
Familiar was her shoulder in the glass,
Through that dark rain: yet it may come to pass
That a changed eye finds such familiar sights
More keenly tempting than new loveliness.
The 'What has been' a moment seemed his own:
The splendours, mysteries, dearer because known,
Nor less divine: Love's inmost sacredness,
Called to him, 'Come!'—In his restraining start,
Eyes nurtured to be looked at, scarce could see
A wave of the great waves of Destiny
Convulsed at a checked impulse of the heart.

VI.

It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.
She had no blush, but slanted down her eye.
Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die:
And most she punishes the tender fool
Who will believe what honours her the most!
Dead! is it dead? She has a pulse, and flow
Of tears, the price of blood-drops, as I know,
For whom the midnight sobs around Love's ghost,
Since then I heard her, and so will sob on.
The love is here; it has but changed its aim.
O bitter barren woman! what's the name?
The name, the name, the new name thou hast won?
Behold me striking the world's coward stroke!
That will I not do, though the sting is dire.
—Beneath the surface this, while by the fire
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke.

VII.

She issues radiant from her dressing-room,
Like one prepared to scale an upper sphere:
—By stirring up a lower, much I fear!
How deftly that oiled barber lays his bloom!
That long-shanked dapper Cupid with frisked curls,
Can make known women torturingly fair;
The gold-eyed serpent dwelling in rich hair,
Awakes beneath his magic whisks and twirls.
His art can take the eyes from out my head,
Until I see with eyes of other men;
While deeper knowledge crouches in its den,
And sends a spark up:—is it true we are wed?
Yea! filthiness of body is most vile,
But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse.
The former, it were not so great a curse
To read on the steel-mirror of her smile.

VIII.

Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt
Of righteous feeling made her pitiful.
Poor twisting worm, so queenly beautiful!
Where came the cleft between us? whose the fault?
My tears are on thee, that have rarely dropped
As balm for any bitter wound of mine:
My breast will open for thee at a sign!
But, no: we are two reed-pipes, coarsely stopped:
The God once filled them with his mellow breath;
And they were music till he flung them down,
Used! used! Hear now the discord-loving clown
Puff his gross spirit in them, worse than death!
I do not know myself without thee more:
In this unholy battle I grow base:
If the same soul be under the same face,
Speak, and a taste of that old time restore!

IX.

He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve
To see the helpless delicate thing receive
His guardianship through certain dark defiles.
Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too?
But still he spared her. Once: 'Have you no fear?'
He said: 'twas dusk; she in his grasp; none near.
She laughed: 'No, surely; am I not with you?'
And uttering that soft starry 'you,' she leaned
Her gentle body near him, looking up;
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,
He drank until the flittering eyelids screened.
Devilish malignant witch! and oh, young beam
Of heaven's circle-glory! Here thy shape
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape—
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.

X.

But where began the change; and what's my crime?
The wretch condemned, who has not been arraigned,
Chafes at his sentence. Shall I, unsustained,
Drag on Love's nerveless body thro' all time?
I must have slept, since now I wake. Prepare,
You lovers, to know Love a thing of moods:
Not like hard life, of laws. In Love's deep woods,
I dreamt of loyal Life:—the offence is there!
Love's jealous woods about the sun are curled;
At least, the sun far brighter there did beam.—
My crime is that, the puppet of a dream,
I plotted to be worthy of the world.
Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince
The facts of life, you still had seen me go
With hindward feather and with forward toe,
Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince!

XI.

Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee
Hums by us with the honey of the Spring,
And showers of sweet notes from the larks on wing,
Are dropping like a noon-dew, wander we.
Or is it now? or was it then? for now,
As then, the larks from running rings pour showers:
The golden foot of May is on the flowers,
And friendly shadows dance upon her brow.
What's this, when Nature swears there is no change
To challenge eyesight? Now, as then, the grace
Of heaven seems holding earth in its embrace.
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel it strange?
Look, woman, in the West. There wilt thou see
An amber cradle near the sun's decline:
Within it, featured even in death divine,
Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

XII.

Not solely that the Future she destroys,
And the fair life which in the distance lies
For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies:
Nor that the passing hour's supporting joys
Have lost the keen-edged flavour, which begat
Distinction in old times, and still should breed
Sweet Memory, and Hope,—earth's modest seed,
And heaven's high-prompting: not that the world is flat
Since that soft-luring creature I embraced,
Among the children of Illusion went:
Methinks with all this loss I were content,
If the mad Past, on which my foot is based,
Were firm, or might be blotted: but the whole
Of life is mixed: the mocking Past will stay:
And if I drink oblivion of a day,
So shorten I the stature of my soul.

XIII.

'I play for Seasons; not Eternities!'
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust!'
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies
She is full sure! Upon her dying rose,
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,
Scarce any retrospection in her eye;
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag—there, an urn.
Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end!
This lesson of our only visible friend,
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn?
Yes! yes!—but, oh, our human rose is fair
Surpassingly! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
When the renewed for ever of a kiss
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair!

XIV.

What soul would bargain for a cure that brings
Contempt the nobler agony to kill?
Rather let me bear on the bitter ill,
And strike this rusty bosom with new stings!
It seems there is another veering fit,
Since on a gold-haired lady's eyeballs pure,
I looked with little prospect of a cure,
The while her mouth's red bow loosed shafts of wit.
Just heaven! can it be true that jealousy
Has decked the woman thus? and does her head
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited?
Madam, you teach me many things that be.
I open an old book, and there I find,
That 'Women still may love whom they deceive.'
Such love I prize not, madam: by your leave,
The game you play at is not to my mind.

XV.

I think she sleeps: it must be sleep, when low
Hangs that abandoned arm toward the floor;
The face turned with it. Now make fast the door.
Sleep on: it is your husband, not your foe.
The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love,
Frights not our modern dames:—well if he did!
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,
Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon: I disturb.
I do not? good!' Her waking infant-stare
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear:
Her own handwriting to me when no curb
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles through;
A woman's tremble—the whole instrument:—
I show another letter lately sent.
The words are very like: the name is new.

XVI.

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. 'Ah, yes!
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:—
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

XVII.

At dinner, she is hostess, I am host.
Went the feast ever cheerfuller? She keeps
The Topic over intellectual deeps
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.
With sparkling surface-eyes we play the ball:
It is in truth a most contagious game:
HIDING THE SKELETON, shall be its name.
Such play as this, the devils might appal!
But here's the greater wonder; in that we
Enamoured of an acting nought can tire,
Each other, like true hypocrites, admire;
Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe,
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.
We waken envy of our happy lot.
Fast, sweet, and golden, shows the marriage-knot.
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light shine.

XVIII.

Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.
Curved open to the river-reach is seen
A country merry-making on the green.
Fair space for signal shakings of the leg.
That little screwy fiddler from his booth,
Whence flows one nut-brown stream, commands the joints
Of all who caper here at various points.
I have known rustic revels in my youth:
The May-fly pleasures of a mind at ease.
An early goddess was a county lass:
A charmed Amphion-oak she tripped the grass.
What life was that I lived? The life of these?
Heaven keep them happy! Nature they seem near.
They must, I think, be wiser than I am;
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.
'Tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer.

XIX.

No state is enviable. To the luck alone
Of some few favoured men I would put claim.
I bleed, but her who wounds I will not blame.
Have I not felt her heart as 'twere my own
Beat thro' me? could I hurt her? heaven and hell!
But I could hurt her cruelly! Can I let
My Love's old time-piece to another set,
Swear it can't stop, and must for ever swell?
Sure, that's one way Love drifts into the mart
Where goat-legged buyers throng. I see not plain:—
My meaning is, it must not be again.
Great God! the maddest gambler throws his heart.
If any state be enviable on earth,
'Tis yon born idiot's, who, as days go by,
Still rubs his hands before him, like a fly,
In a queer sort of meditative mirth.

XX.

I am not of those miserable males
Who sniff at vice and, daring not to snap,
Do therefore hope for heaven. I take the hap
Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails,
Propels; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,
I know the devil has sufficient weight
To bear: I lay it not on him, or fate.
Besides, he's damned. That man I do suspect
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce
With what ensues from his own slipperiness.
I have just found a wanton-scented tress
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.
Of days and nights it is demonstrative,
That, like some aged star, gleam luridly.
If for those times I must ask charity,
Have I not any charity to give?

XXI.

We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn;
My friend being third. He who at love once laughed,
Is in the weak rib by a fatal shaft
Struck through, and tells his passion's bashful dawn
And radiant culmination, glorious crown,
When 'this' she said: went 'thus': most wondrous she.
Our eyes grow white, encountering: that we are three,
Forgetful; then together we look down.
But he demands our blessing; is convinced
That words of wedded lovers must bring good.
We question; if we dare! or if we should!
And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.
Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign
To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes,
She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes:
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

XXII.

What may the woman labour to confess?
There is about her mouth a nervous twitch.
'Tis something to be told, or hidden:—which?
I get a glimpse of hell in this mild guess.
She has desires of touch, as if to feel
That all the household things are things she knew.
She stops before the glass. What sight in view?
A face that seems the latest to reveal!
For she turns from it hastily, and tossed
Irresolute, steals shadow-like to where
I stand; and wavering pale before me there,
Her tears fall still as oak-leaves after frost.
She will not speak. I will not ask. We are
League-sundered by the silent gulf between.
You burly lovers on the village green,
Yours is a lower, and a happier star!

XXIII.

'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house
Receives us: rooms are full: we can but get
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse
Knocks upon hard the midnight's hollow door,
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.
Why did I come here in that dullard fit?
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat:—
Come, Shame, burn to my soul! and Pride, and Pain
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain!
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept:
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

XXIV.

The misery is greater, as I live!
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,
That she does penance now for no offence,
Save against Love. The less can I forgive!
The less can I forgive, though I adore
That cruel lovely pallor which surrounds
Her footsteps; and the low vibrating sounds
That come on me, as from a magic shore.
Low are they, but most subtle to find out
The shrinking soul. Madam, 'tis understood
When women play upon their womanhood;
It means, a Season gone. And yet I doubt
But I am duped. That nun-like look waylays
My fancy. Oh! I do but wait a sign!
Pluck out the eyes of pride! thy mouth to mine!
Never! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways!

XXV.

You like not that French novel? Tell me why.
You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.
The actors are, it seems, the usual three:
Husband, and wife, and lover. She—but fie!
In England we'll not hear of it. Edmond,
The lover, her devout chagrin doth share;
Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,
Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond:
So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.
Meantime the husband is no more abused:
Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.
Then hangeth all on one tremendous IF:—
If she will choose between them! She does choose;
And takes her husband, like a proper wife.
Unnatural? My dear, these things are life:
And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

XXVI.

Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,
Has earth beneath his wings: from reddened eve
He views the rosy dawn. In vain they weave
The fatal web below while far he flies.
But when the arrow strikes him, there's a change.
He moves but in the track of his spent pain,
Whose red drops are the links of a harsh chain,
Binding him to the ground, with narrow range.
A subtle serpent then has Love become.
I had the eagle in my bosom erst:
Henceforward with the serpent I am cursed.
I can interpret where the mouth is dumb.
Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth.
Perchance my heart may pardon you this deed:
But be no coward:—you that made Love bleed,
You must bear all the venom of his tooth!

XXVII.

Distraction is the panacea, Sir!
I hear my oracle of Medicine say.
Doctor! that same specific yesterday
I tried, and the result will not deter
A second trial. Is the devil's line
Of golden hair, or raven black, composed?
And does a cheek, like any sea-shell rosed,
Or clear as widowed sky, seem most divine?
No matter, so I taste forgetfulness.
And if the devil snare me, body and mind,
Here gratefully I score:—he seemëd kind,
When not a soul would comfort my distress!
O sweet new world, in which I rise new made!
O Lady, once I gave love: now I take!
Lady, I must be flattered. Shouldst thou wake
The passion of a demon, be not afraid.

XXVIII.

I must be flattered. The imperious
Desire speaks out. Lady, I am content
To play with you the game of Sentiment,
And with you enter on paths perilous;
But if across your beauty I throw light,
To make it threefold, it must be all mine.
First secret; then avowed. For I must shine
Envied,—I, lessened in my proper sight!
Be watchful of your beauty, Lady dear!
How much hangs on that lamp you cannot tell.
Most earnestly I pray you, tend it well:
And men shall sée me as a burning sphere;
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan
To be the God of such a grand sunflower!
I feel the promptings of Satanic power,
While you do homage unto me alone.

XXIX.

Am I failing? For no longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould;
Not like the consecration of the Past!
Is my soul beggared? Something more than earth
I cry for still: I cannot be at peace
In having Love upon a mortal lease.
I cannot take the woman at her worth!
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed
Our human nakedness, and could endow
With spiritual splendour a white brow
That else had grinned at me the fact I loathed?
A kiss is but a kiss now! and no wave
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.
But, as you will! we'll sit contentedly,
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

XXX.

What are we first? First, animals; and next
Intelligences at a leap; on whom
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
Intelligence and instinct now are one.
But nature says: 'My children most they seem
When they least know me: therefore I decree
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.
Then if we study Nature we are wise.
Thus do the few who live but with the day:
The scientific animals are they.—
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

XXXI.

This golden head has wit in it. I live
Again, and a far higher life, near her.
Some women like a young philosopher;
Perchance because he is diminutive.
For woman's manly god must not exceed
Proportions of the natural nursing size.
Great poets and great sages draw no prize
With women: but the little lap-dog breed,
Who can be hugged, or on a mantel-piece
Perched up for adoration, these obtain
Her homage. And of this we men are vain?
Of this! 'Tis ordered for the world's increase!
Small flattery! Yet she has that rare gift
To beauty, Common Sense. I am approved.
It is not half so nice as being loved,
And yet I do prefer it. What's my drift?

XXXII.

Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift
To beauty, Common Sense. To see her lie
With her fair visage an inverted sky
Bloom-covered, while the underlids uplift,
Would almost wreck the faith; but when her mouth
(Can it kiss sweetly? sweetly!) would address
The inner me that thirsts for her no less,
And has so long been languishing in drouth,
I feel that I am matched; that I am man!
One restless corner of my heart or head,
That holds a dying something never dead,
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.
It means, that woman is not, I opine,
Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp
For serpent's bites? 'Twould calm me could I clasp
Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine!

XXXIII.

'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen
The sumptuously-feathered angel pierce
Prone Lucifer, descending. Looked he fierce,
Showing the fight a fair one? Too serene!
The young Pharsalians did not disarray
Less willingly their locks of floating silk:
That suckling mouth of his, upon the milk
Of heaven might still be feasting through the fray.
Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,
They conquer not upon such easy terms.
Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms.
And does he grow half human, all is right.'
This to my Lady in a distant spot,
Upon the theme: *While mind is mastering clay,*
Gross clay invades it. If the spy you play,
My wife, read this! Strange love talk, is it not?

XXXIV.

Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes:
The Deluge or else Fire! She's well; she thanks
My husbandship. Our chain on silence clanks.
Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs.
Am I quite well? Most excellent in health!
The journals, too, I diligently peruse.
Vesuvius is expected to give news:
Niagara is no noisier. By stealth
Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She's glad
I'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.
'And are not you?' 'How can I be?' 'Take ship!
For happiness is somewhere to be had.'
'Nowhere for me!' Her voice is barely heard.
I am not melted, and make no pretence.
With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.
Niagara, or Vesuvius, is deferred.

XXXV.

It is no vulgar nature I have wived,
Secretive, sensitive, she takes a wound
Deep to her soul, as if the sense had swooned,
And not a thought of vengeance had survived.
No confidences has she: but relief
Must come to one whose suffering is acute.
O have a care of natures that are mute!
They punish you in acts: their steps are brief.
What is she doing? What does she demand
From Providence, or me? She is not one
Long to endure this torpidly, and shun
The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand.
At Forfeits during snow we played, and I
Must kiss her. 'Well performed!' I said: then she:
''Tis hardly worth the money, you agree?'
Save her? What for? To act this wedded lie!

XXXVI.

My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.
The charm of women is, that even while
You're probed by them for tears, you yet may smile,
Nay, laugh outright, as I have done just now.
The interview was gracious: they anoint
(To me aside) each other with fine praise:
Discriminating compliments they raise,
That hit with wondrous aim on the weak point:
My Lady's nose of Nature might complain.
It is not fashioned aptly to express
Her character of large-browed steadfastness.
But Madam says: Thereof she may be vain!
Now, Madam's faulty feature is a glazed
And inaccessible eye, that has soft fires,
Wide gates, at love-time only. This admires
My Lady. At the two I stand amazed.

XXXVII.

Along the garden terrace, under which
A purple valley (lighted at its edge
By smoky torch-flame on the long cloud-ledge
Whereunder dropped the chariot), glimmers rich,
A quiet company we pace, and wait
The dinner-bell in prae-digestive calm.
So sweet up violet banks the Southern balm
Breathes round, we care not if the bell be late:
Though here and there grey seniors question Time
In irritable coughings. With slow foot
The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,
Begins among her silent bars to climb.
As in and out, in silvery dusk, we thread,
I hear the laugh of Madam, and discern
My Lady's heel before me at each turn.
Our tragedy, is it alive or dead?

XXXVIII.

Give to imagination some pure light
In human form to fix it, or you shame
The devils with that hideous human game:—
Imagination urging appetite!
Thus fallen have earth's greatest Gogmagogs,
Who dazzle us, whom we can not revere:
Imagination is the charioteer
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.
So, therefore, my dear Lady, let me love!
My soul is arrowy to the light in you.
You know me that I never can renew
The bond that woman broke: what would you have?
'Tis Love, or Vileness! not a choice between,
Save petrifaction! What does Pity here?
She killed a thing, and now it's dead, 'tis dear.
Oh, when you counsel me, think what you mean!

XXXIX.

She yields: my Lady in her noblest mood
Has yielded: she, my golden-crownëd rose!
The bride of every sense! more sweet than those
Who breathe the violet breath of maidenhood.
O visage of still music in the sky!
Soft moon! I feel thy song, my fairest friend!
True harmony within can apprehend
Dumb harmony without. And hark! 'tis nigh!
Belief has struck the note of sound: a gleam
Of living silver shows me where she shook
Her long white fingers down the shadowy brook,
That sings her song, half waking, half in dream.
What two come here to mar this heavenly tune?
A man is one: the woman bears my name,
And honour. Their hands touch! Am I still tame?
God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon!

XL.

I bade my Lady think what she might mean.
Know I my meaning, I? Can I love one,
And yet be jealous of another? None
Commits such folly. Terrible Love, I ween,
Has might, even dead, half sighing to upheave
The lightless seas of selfishness amain:
Seas that in a man's heart have no rain
To fall and still them. Peace can I achieve,
By turning to this fountain-source of woe,
This woman, who's to Love as fire to wood?
She breathed the violet breath of maidenhood
Against my kisses once! but I say, No!
The thing is mocked at! Helplessly afloat,
I know not what I do, whereto I strive,
The dread that my old love may be alive,
Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

XLI.

How many a thing which we cast to the ground,
When others pick it up becomes a gem!
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them;
And by reflected light its worth is found.
Yet for us still 'tis nothing! and that zeal
Of false appreciation quickly fades.
This truth is little known to human shades,
How rare from their own instinct 'tis to feel!
They waste the soul with spurious desire,
That is not the ripe flame upon the bough.
We two have taken up a lifeless vow
To rob a living passion: dust for fire!
Madam is grave, and eyes the clock that tells
Approaching midnight. We have struck despair
Into two hearts. O, look we like a pair
Who for fresh nuptials joyfully yield all else?

XLII.

I am to follow her. There is much grace
In woman when thus bent on martyrdom.
They think that dignity of soul may come,
Perchance, with dignity of body. Base!
But I was taken by that air of cold
And statuesque sedateness, when she said
'I'm going'; lit a taper, bowed her head,
And went, as with the stride of Pallas bold.
Fleshly indifference horrible! The hands
Of Time now signal: O, she's safe from me!
Within those secret walls what do I see?
Where first she set the taper down she stands:
Not Pallas: Hebe shamed! Thoughts black as death,
Like a stirred pool in sunshine break. Her wrists
I catch: she faltering, as she half resists,
'You love . . . ? love . . . ? love . . . ?' all in an in-
drawn breath.

XLIII.

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense; or failing that, degrade!
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

XLIV.

They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,
A porter at the rosy temple's gate.
I missed him going: but it is my fate
To come upon him now beside his wells;
Whereby I know that I Love's temple leave,
And that the purple doors have closed behind.
Poor soul! if in those early days unkind,
Thy power to sting had been but power to grieve,
We now might with an equal spirit meet,
And not be matched like innocence and vice.
She for the Temple's worship has paid price,
And takes the coin of Pity as a cheat.
She sees through simulation to the bone:
What's best in her impels her to the worst:
Never, she cries, shall Pity soothe Love's thirst,
Or foul hypocrisy for truth atone!

XLV.

It is the season of the sweet wild rose,
My Lady's emblem in the heart of me!
So golden-crownëd shines she gloriously,
And with that softest dream of blood she glows:
Mild as an evening heaven round Hesper bright!
I pluck the flower, and smell it, and revive
The time when in her eyes I stood alive.
I seem to look upon it out of Night.
Here's Madam, stepping hastily. Her whims
Bid her demand the flower, which I let drop.
As I proceed, I feel her sharply stop,
And crush it under heel with trembling limbs.
She joins me in a cat-like way, and talks
Of company, and even condescends
To utter laughing scandal of old friends.
These are the summer days, and these our walks.

XLVI.

At last we parley: we so strangely dumb
In such a close communion! It befell
About the sounding of the Matin-bell,
And lo! her place was vacant, and the hum
Of loneliness was round me. Then I rose,
And my disordered brain did guide my foot
To that old wood where our first love-salute
Was interchanged: the source of many throes!
There did I see her, not alone. I moved
Toward her, and made proffer of my arm.
She took it simply, with no rude alarm;
And that disturbing shadow passed reproved.
I felt the pained speech coming, and declared
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,
While with a widening soul on me she stared.

XLVII.

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard their noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

XLVIII.

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar
Utterly this fair garden we might win.
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.
Alas! that was the fatal draught, I fear.
For when of my lost Lady came the word,
This woman, O this agony of flesh!
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,
That I might seek that other like a bird.
I do adore the nobleness! despise
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.
Will the hard world my sentience of her share?
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

XLIX.

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;
And she believed his old love had returned,
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.
She dared not say, 'This is my breast: look in.'
But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.
That night he learned how silence best can speak
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
About the middle of the night her call
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
'Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!' she said.
Lethe had passed those lips, and he knew all.

L.

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours:
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY

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I.

One fairest of the ripe unwedded left
Her shadow on the Sage's path; he found,
By common signs, that she had done a theft.
He could have made the sovereign heights resound
With questions of the wherefore of her state:
He on far other but an hour before
Intent. And was it man, or was it mate,
That she disdained? or was there haply more?

About her mouth a placid humour slipped
The dimple, as you see smooth lakes at eve
Spread melting rings where late a swallow dipped.
The surface was attentive to receive,
The secret underneath enfolded fast.
She had the step of the unconquered, brave,
Not arrogant; and if the vessel's mast
Waved liberty, no challenge did it wave.

Her eyes were the sweet world desired of souls,
With something of a wavering line unspelt.
They held the look whose tenderness condoles
For what the sister in the look has dealt
Of fatal beyond healing; and her tones
A woman's honeyed amorous outvied,
As when in a dropped viol the wood-throb moans
Among the sobbing strings, that plain and chide

Like infants for themselves, less deep to thrill
Than those rich mother-notes for them breathed round.
Those voices are not magic of the will
To strike love's wound, but of love's wound give sound
Conveying it; the yearnings, pains and dreams.
They waft to the moist tropics after storm,
When out of passion spent thick incense steams,
And jewel-belted clouds the wreck transform.

Was never hand on brush or lyre to paint
Her gracious manners, where the nuptial ring
Of melody clasped motion in restraint:
The reed-blade with the breeze thereof may sing.

With such endowments armed was she and decked
To make her spoken thoughts eclipse her kind;

Surpassing many a giant intellect,
The marvel of that cradled infant mind.
It clenched the tiny fist, it curled the toe;
Cherubic laughed, enticed, dispensed, absorbed;
And promised in fair feminine to grow
A Sage's match and mate, more heavenly orbed.

II.

Across his path the spouseless Lady cast
Her shadow, and the man that thing became.
His youth uprising called his age the Past.
This was the strong grey head of laurelled name,
And in his bosom an inverted Sage
Mistook for light of morn the light which sank.
But who while veins run blood shall know the page
Succeeding ere we turn upon our blank?

Comes Beauty with her tale of moon and cloud,
Her silvered rims of mystery pointing in
To hollows of the half-veiled unavowed,
Where beats her secret life, grey heads will spin
Quick as the young, and spell those hieroglyphs
Of phosphorescent dusk devoutly bent;
They drink a cup to whirl on dizzier cliffs
For their shamed fall, which asks, why was she sent!
Why, and of whom, and whence; and tell they truth,
The legends of her mission to beguile?

Hard likeness to the toilful apes of youth,
He bore at times, and tempted the sly smile;
And not on her soft lips was it descried.
She stepped her way benevolently grave:
Nor sign that Beauty fed her worm of pride,
By tossing victim to the courtier knave,

Let peep, nor of the naughty pride gave sign.
Rather 'twas humbleness in being pursued,
As pilgrim to the temple of a shrine.
Had he not wits to pierce the mask he wooed?
All wisdom's armoury this man could wield;
And if the cynic in the Sage it pleased,
Traverse her woman's curtain and poor shield,
For new example of a world diseased;
Showing her shrineless, not a temple, bare;
A curtain ripped to tatters by the blast.
Yet she most surely to this man stood fair:
He worshipped like the young enthusiast,
Named simpleton or poet. Did he read
Right through, and with the voice she held reserved
Amid her vacant ruins jointly plead?

Compassion for the man thus noble nerved
The pity for herself she felt in him,

To wreak a deed of sacrifice, and save;
At least, be worthy. That our soul may swim,
We sink our heart down bubbling under wave.
It bubbles till it drops among the wrecks.
But, ah! confession of a woman's breast:
She eminent, she honoured of her sex!
Truth speaks, and takes the spots of the confessed,
To veil them. None of women, save their vile,
Plays traitor to an army in the field.
The cries most vindicating most defile.
How shall a cause to Nature be appealed,
When, under pressure of their common foe,
Her sisters shun the Mother and disown,
On pain of his intolerable crow
Above the fiction, built for him, o'erthrown?
Irrational he is, irrational
Must they be, though not Reason's light shall wane
In them with ever Nature at close call,

Behind the fiction torturing to sustain ;
Who hear her in the milk, and sometimes make
A tongueless answer, shivered on a sigh :
Whereat men dread their lofty structure's quake
Once more, and in their hosts for tocsin ply
The crazy roar of peril, leonine
For injured majesty. That sigh of dames
Is rare and soon suppressed. Not they combine
To shake the structure sheltering them, which tames
Their lustier if not wilder : fixed are they,
In elegancy scarce denoting ease ;
And do they breathe, it is not to betray
The martyr in the caryatides.
Yet here and there along the graceful row
Is one who fetches breath from deeps, who deems,
Moved by a desperate craving, their old foe
May yield a trustier friend than woman seems,
And aid to bear the sculptured floral weight

Massed upon heads not utterly of stone :
May stamp endurance by expounding fate.

She turned to him, and, This you seek is gone :
Look in, she said, as pants the furnace, brief,
Frost-white. She gave his hearing sight to view
The silent chamber of a brown curled leaf :
Thing that had throbbed ere shot black lightning
through.
No further sign of heart could he discern :
The picture of her speech was winter sky ;
A headless figure folding a cleft urn,
Where tears once at the overflow were dry.

III.

So spake she her first utterance on the rack.
It softened torment, in the funeral hues
Round wan Romance at ebb, but drove her back
To listen to herself, herself accuse
Harshly as Love's imperial cause allowed.
She meant to grovel, and her lover praised
So high o'er the condemnatory crowd,
That she perforce a fellow phoenix blazed.

The picture was of hand fast joined to hand,
Both pushed from angry skies, their grasp more pledged
Under the threatened flash of a bright brand
At arm's length up, for severing action edged.

Why, then Love's Court of Honour contemplate ;
And two drowned shorecasts, who, for the life esteemed
Above their lost, invoke an advocate
In passion's purity, thereby redeemed.

Redeemed, uplifted, glimmering on a throne,
The woman stricken by an arrow falls.
His advocate she can be, not her own,
If, Traitress to thy sex ! one sister calls.

Have we such scenes of drapery's mournfulness
On Beauty's revelations, witched we plant,
Over the fair shape humbled to confess,
An angel's buckler, with loud choiric chant.

IV.

No knightly sword to serve, nor harp of bard,
The lady's hand in her physician's knew.
She had not hoped for them as her award,
When zig-zag on the tongue electric flew
Her charge of counter-motives, none impure:
But muteness whipped her skin. She could have said,
Her free confession was to work his cure,
Show proofs for why she could not love or wed.
Were they not shown? His muteness shook in thrall
Her body on the verge of that black pit
Sheer from the treacherous confessional,
Demanding further, while perusing it.

Slave is the open mouth beneath the closed.
She sank; she snatched at colours; they were peel

Of fruit past savour, in derision rosed.
For the dark downward then her soul did reel.
A press of hideous impulse urged to speak:
A novel dread of man enchained her dumb.
She felt the silence thicken, heard it shriek,
Heard Life subsiding on the eternal hum:
Welcome to women, when, between man's laws
And Nature's thirsts, they, soul from body torn,
Give suck at breast to a celestial cause,
Named by the mouth infernal, and forsworn.

Natheless her forehead twitched a sad content
To think the cure so manifest, so frail
Her charm remaining. Was the curtain's rent
Too wide? he but a man of that herd male?

She saw him as that herd of the forked head
Butting the woman harrowed on her knees,

Clothed only in life's last devouring red.
Confession at her fearful instant sees
Judicial Silence write the devil fact
In letters of the skeleton: at once,
Swayed on the supplication of her act,
The rabble reading, roaring to denounce,
She joins. No longer colouring, with skips
At tangles, picture that for eyes in tears
Might swim the sequence, she addressed her lips
To do the scaffold's office at his ears.

Into the bitter judgement of that herd
On women, she, deeming it present, fell.
Her frenzy of abasement hugged the word
They stone with, and so pile their citadel
To launch at outcasts the foul levin bolt.
As had he flung it, in her breast it burned.
Face and reflect it did her hot revolt

From hardness, to the writhing rebel turned
Because the golden buckler was withheld.
She to herself applies the powder-spark,
For joy of one wild demon burst ere quelled,
Perishing to astound the tyrant Dark.

She had the Scriptural word so scored on brain,
It rang through air to sky, and rocked a world
That danced down shades the scarlet dance profane;
Most women! see! by the man's view dustward hurled,
Impenitent, submissive, torn in two.
They sink upon their nature, the unnamed,
And sops of nourishment may get some few,
In place of understanding scourged and shamed.

Barely have seasoned women understood
The great Irrational, who thunders power,

Drives Nature to her primitive wild wood,
And courts her in the covert's dewy hour:
Returning to his fortress nigh night's end,
With execration of her daughters' lures.
They help him the proud fortress to defend,
Nor see what front it wears, what life immures,
The murder it commits; nor that its base
Is shifty as a huckster's opening deal
For bargain under smoothest market face,
While Gentleness bids frigid Justice feel,
Justice protests that Reason is her seat;
Elect Convenience, as Reason masked,
Hears calmly cramped Humanity entreat;
Until a sentient world is overtasked,
And rouses Reason's fountain-self: she calls
On Nature; Nature answers: Share your guilt
In common when contention cracks the walls
Of the big house which not on me is built.

The Lady said as much as breath will bear;
To happier sisters inconceivable:
Contemptible to veterans of the fair,
Who show for a convolving pearly shell,
A treasure of the shore, their written book.
As much as woman's breath will bear and live,
Shaped she to words beneath a knotted look,
That held as if for grain the summing sieve.

Her judge now brightened without pause, as wakes
Our homely daylight after dread of spells.
Lips sugared to let loose the little snakes
Of slimy lustres ringing elfin bells
About a story of the naked flesh,
Intending but to put some garment on,
Should learn, that in the subject they enmesh,
A traitor lurks and will be known anon.

Delusion heating pricks the torpid doubt,
Stationed for index down an ancient track :
And ware of it was he while she poured out,
A broken moon on forest-waters black.

Though past the stage where midway men are skilled
To scan their senses wriggling under plough,
When yet to the charmed seed of speech distilled,
Their hearts are fallow, he, and witless how,
Loathing, had yielded, like bruised limb to leech,
Not handsomely ; but now beholding bleed
Soul of the woman in her prostrate speech,
The valour of that rawness he could read.
Thence flashed it, as the crimson currents ran
From senses up to thoughts, how she had read
Maternally the warm remainder man
Beneath his crust, and Nature's pity shed,
In shedding dearer than heart's blood to light

His vision of the path mild Wisdom walks.
Therewith he could espy Confession's fright;
Her need of him: these flowers grow on stalks;
They suck from soil, and have their urgencies
Beside and with the lovely face mid leaves.
Veins of divergencies, convergencies,
Our botanist in womankind perceives;
And if he hugs no wound, the man can prize
That splendid consummation and sure proof
Of more than heart in her, who might despise,
Who drowns herself, for pity up aloof
To soar and be like Nature's pity: she
Instinctive of what virtue in young days
Had served him for his pilot-star on sea,
To trouble him in haven. Thus his gaze
Came out of rust, and more than the schooled tongue
Was gifted to encourage and assure.
He gave her of the deep well she had sprung;

And name it gratitude, the word is poor.
But name it gratitude, is aught as rare
From sex to sex? And let it have survived
Their conflict, comes the peace between the pair,
Unknown to thousands husbanded and wived:
Unknown to Passion, generous for prey:
Unknown to Love, too blissful in a truce.
Their tenderest of self did each one slay;
His cloak of dignity, her fleur de luce;
Her lily flower, and his abolla cloak,
Things living, slew they, and no artery bled.
A moment of some sacrificial smoke,
They passed, and were the dearer for their dead.

He learnt how much we gain who make no claims.
A nightcap on his flicker of grey fire,
Was thought of her sharp shudder in the flames,
Confessing; and its conjured image dire,

Of love, the torrent on the valley dashed ;
The whirlwind swathing tremulous peaks ; young force,
Visioned to hold corrected and abashed
Our senile emulous ; which rolls its course
Proud to the shattering end : with these few last
Hot quintessential drops of bryony juice,
Squeezed out in anguish : all of that once vast !
And still, though having skin for man's abuse,
Though no more glorying in the beauteous wreath
Shot skyward from a blood at passionate jet,
Repenting but in words, that stand as teeth
Between the vivid lips ; a vassal set ;
And numb, of formal value. Are we true
In nature, never natural thing repents ;
Albeit receiving punishment for due,
Among the group of this world's penitents ;
Albeit remorsefully regretting, oft
Cravenly, while the scourge no shudder spares.

Our world believes it stabler if the soft
Are whipped to show the face repentance wears.
Then hear it, in a moan of atheist gloom,
Deplore the weedy growth of hypocrites;
Count Nature devilish, and accept for doom,
The chasm between our passions and our wits.

Affecting lunar whiteness, patent snows,
It trembles at betrayal of a sore.
Hers is the glacier-conscience, to expose
Impurities for clearness at the core.

She to her hungered thundering in breast,
Ye shall not starve, not feebly designates
The world repressing as a life repressed,
Judged by the wasted martyrs it creates.

How Sin, amid the shades Cimmerian,
Repents, she points for sight: and she avers,
The hoofed half-angel in the Puritan
Nigh reads her when no brutish wrath deters.

Sin against immaturity, the sin
Of ravenous excess, what deed divides
Man from vitality; these bleed within;
Bleed in the crippled relic that abides.
Perpetually they bleed; a limb is lost,
A piece of life, the very spirit maimed.
But culprit who the law of man has crossed
With Nature's, dubiously within is blamed;
Despite our cry at cutting off the whip,
Our shiver in the night when numbers frown:
We but bewail a broken fellowship,
A sting, an isolation, a fall'n crown.

Abject of sinners is that sensitive,
The flesh, amenable to stripes, miscalled
Incorrigible: such title do we give
To the poor shrinking stuff wherewith we are walled;
And taking it for Nature, place in ban
Our Mother, as a Power wanton-willed,
The shame and baffler of the soul of man,
The recreant, reptilious. Do thou build
Thy mind on her foundations in earth's bed;
Behold man's mind the child of her keen rod,
For teaching how the wits and passions wed
To rear that temple of the credible God;
Sacred the letters of her laws, and plain,
Will shine, to guide thy feet and hold thee firm:
Then, as a pathway through a field of grain,
Man's laws appear the blind progressive worm,
That moves by touch, and thrust of linking rings:

The which to endow with vision, lift from mud
To level of their nature's aims and springs,
Must those, the twain beside our vital flood,
Now on opposing banks, the twain at strife
(Whom the so rosy ferryman invites
To junction, and mid-channel over Life,
Unmasked to the ghostly, much asunder smites),
Instruct in deeper than Convenience,
In higher than the harvest of a year.
Only the rooted knowledge to high sense
Of heavenly can mount, and feel the spur
For fruitfullest advancement, eye a mark
Beyond the path with grain on either hand,
Help to the steering of our social Ark
Over the barbarous waters unto land.

For us the double conscience and its war,
The serving of two masters, false to both,

Until those twain, who spring the root and are
The knowledge in division, plight a troth
Of equal hands: nor longer circulate
A pious token for their current coin,
To growl at the exchange; they, mate and mate,
Fair feminine and masculine shall join
Upon an upper plane, still common mould,
Where stamped religion and reflective pace
A statelier measure, and the hoop of gold
Rounds to horizon for their soul's embrace.
Then shall those noblest of the earth and sun
Inmix unlike to waves on savage sea.
But not till Nature's laws and man's are one,
Can marriage of the man and woman be.

V.

He passed her through the sermon's dull defile.
Down under billowy vapour-gorges heaved
The city and the vale and mountain-pile.
She felt strange push of shuttle-threads that weaved.

A new land in an old beneath her lay;
And forth to meet it did her spirit rush,
As bride who without shame has come to say,
Husband, in his dear face that caused her blush.

A natural woman's heart, not more than clad
By station and bright raiment, gathers heat
From nakedness in trusted hands: she had
The joy of those who feel the world's heart beat,
After long doubt of it as fire or ice;
Because one man had helped her to breathe free;

Surprised to faith in something of a price
Past the old charity in chivalry:—
Our first wild step to right the loaded scales
Displaying women shamefully outweighed.
The wisdom of humaneness best avails
For serving justice till that fraud is brayed.

Her buried body fed the life she drank.
And not another stripping of her wound!
The startled thought on black delirium sank,
While with her gentle surgeon she communed,
And woman's prospect of the yoke repelled.
Her buried body gave her flowers and food;
The peace, the homely skies, the springs that welled;
Love, the large love that folds the multitude.

Soul's chastity in honesty, and this
With beauty, made the dower to men refused.

And little do they know the prize they miss ;
Which is their happy fortune ! Thus he mused.

For him, the cynic in the Sage had play
A hazy moment, by a breath dispersed ;
To think, of all alive most wedded they,
Whom time disjoined ! He needed her quick thirst
For renovated earth : on earth she gazed,
With humble aim to foot beside the wise.
Lo, where the eyelashes of night are raised
Yet lowly over morning's pure grey eyes.

Love is winged for two,

In the worst he weathers,

When their hearts are tied;

But if they divide,

O too true!

Cracks a globe, and feathers, feathers,

Feathers all the ground bestrew.

I was breast of morning sea,

Rosy plume on forest dun,

I the laugh in rainy fleeces,

While with me

She made one.

Now must we pick up our pieces,

For that then so winged were we.

Ask, is Love divine,

Voices all are, ay.

Question for the sign,

There's a common sigh.

Would we through our years,

Love forego,

Quit of scars and tears?

Ah, but no, no, no!

———

Joy is fleet,

Sorrow slow.

Love so sweet,

Sorrow will sow.

Love, that has flown

Ere day's decline,

Love to have known,

Sorrow, be mine!

THE LESSON OF GRIEF

Not ere the bitter herb we taste,
Which ages thought of happy times,
To plant us in a weeping waste,
Rings with our fellows this one heart
Accordant chimes.

When I had shed my glad year's leaf,
I did believe I stood alone,
Till that great company of Grief
Taught me to know this craving heart
For not my own.

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